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ABSTRACT

To eliminate the rapid pace, heavy reliance on evidence cards, and professional jargon associated with the debate style of the National Debate Topic (NDT), the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) proposed the use of a value topic--instead of a policy topic--to restore balance among argument, analysis, and evidence in debate. Initial arguments against CEDA were that it was senseless to argue attitudes, although many writers hold value judgments equal to factual proposition. While NDT relied on excessive evidence, CEDA debated with an absence of evidence, but it has been observed that most NDT debators use opinion evidence as first choice, followed by factual evidence. If evidence is to give clarity, insight, and support to the case in point, then evidence can be considered as facts, statistics, and value judgments. Values can be identified and assessed on the same principles as are facts. In value proposition debates, judges are not deciding which value is better, but rather which course of action is likely to produce the least harm. Coaches and debators should consider value propositions as being equal in importance to policy propositions and thus should explore all the possible ways to evaluate value judgments. (HTH)

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CEDA VS. NDT

THE FACT-VALUE DICHOTOMY

EMERGES IN EDUCATIONAL DEBATE

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An instructor of argumentation and debate classes learns that providing students with the basic tools to evaluate rhetorical reasons seems to be the basic goal of the authors of argumentation and debate texts. This is seen in one leading text, Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy (Ziegelmueller and Dause, 1975). The authors claim:

> ...to be able to arrive at satisfactory answers to intimate personal problems and to achieve intellectual independence ...to avoid the disruption and suppression of force, and yet be effective in implementing social changes, we must ultimately rely upon the methods of argumentation.[1]

This is generally accepted as a basic philosophy in educational debate, but many in the forensic community would argue that present-day debate style fails to achieve this goal.

Most judges at debate tournaments expect an exercise of reasoned discourse, but often they hear only jargon, unintelligible, except possibly to those debaters participating. Discouragement toward this generally accepted debate style, (National Debate Topic), is not uncommon. In fact, it led to the formation of a new debate organization, the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA). In realizing that CEDA seems to have a place in the forensic community (based upon the increase of CEDA debate in tournaments), coaches should be aware of the particular attitudes of both styles of debate and the problems stemming from such attitudes.

Members of CEDA proposed to eliminate the rapid-fire

(1)

delivery, heavy reliance upon evidence cards, and squirrel cases associated with NDT, which they felt were a detriment to achieving the goal of educational debate. Jack Howe, Executive Secretary of CEDA, notes these characteristics of NDT:

> The abundance of evidence and the belief that as much of it as possible had to be used during a round, the use of broad national topics that were incapable of limited definition...the rapidity of speech during debates...the use of jargon...that made it all but impossible for the debater to communicate with anyone except his opponents and an "expert" judge...did not seem consistent with the educational objectives that had previously been associated with good debate.[2]

In their attempt to achieve the previously stated goal, members of CEDA proposed the use of a value topic in restoring "effective communicative speaking, audience analysis, and a balance among argument, analysis, and evidence to debate."[3]

Reactions to CEDA were heated. Debating propositions of value rather than of policy was absurd--the forensic community had always debated policy. Resistance to value propositions is best explained by Ronald Matlon:

> Although they are embedded in "ought to" statements, value sub-propositions usually get lost in our persistent effort to debate only propositions of policy.[4]

Determination to debate only propositions of policy is a reflection of tradition; we tend to value or believe only those ideas supported by facts or statistics -- scientism. This belief in scientism is noted by Wayne Booth as one of the modern dogmas of rhetoric.[5] The resulting conflict, proposition of policy vs. proposition of value, is a prime example of the fact-value dichotomy that Booth treats in

his book, Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent.[6] Hugh Petrie discusses the effect of debating value propositions in the forensic community:

> The most pernicious of these confusions centers around the fact-value dichotomy... because there is a half-truth associated with the...dichotomy which prompts the following kind of argument: value propositions are neither true nor false. But the subject matter of logic are propositions which can be true or false... But further, many propositions in rhetorical argumentation are value propositions. Hence rhetorical argumentation is the wrong subject matter for formal logic.[7]

Petrie further discusses the existence of a strong traditional belief that upholds value judgements equal to factual propositions in stating truths. One contemporary supporter of this view is Joseph Wenzel, who realizes the definite fact-value dichotomy. In his attempt toward achieving a "rhetoric of assent,"[8] (Booth's term), he declares that it is in error,

> ...to seek to justify values on the same epistemological basis on which we justify factual statements, or...to suppose, because value statements cannot be justified in the same manner as factual statements, that they are in some ways epistemologically inferior...the fact of human community, of duty, of the recognition of mutual obligation is what gives significance to the class of value statements that we call ethical.[9]

Further, in emphasizing the importance of value statements, Wenzel acknowledges,

> values exist in an intersubjective realm of agreements that are the fabric of a community; they exist in the actions of discourse of persons constructing, sustaining, testing, and revising the rules by which they will live and act together.[10]

Many would disagree with Wenzel's claim that value statements are as important as those of fact and would consider the idea of debating value propositions absurd. One critic is Charles Stevens, who believes,

> ...to the extent that a value dispute is based upon difference in belief about the facts, it can be resolved logically; to the extent that such a dispute involves disagreement in attitudes, i.e., evaluations, it cannot be resolved rationally, and one merely has recourse to "persuasion"....[11]

Of course there are other opposing views such as those offered by Thomas Kane and Bernard Brock, who argue on different terms: "...all of our theories of argument must be explicitly formulated before we allow our students to experiment with them."[12] As Matlon points out, though, both Kane and Brock deny reality on two counts: 1. judgements on values are made every day, and 2. many times practice comes before theory.[13] Also, there is the argument that the debate format would have to be changed in terms of speaker duties, construction of speeches, and the like.[14] The latter two arguments against value propositions are minor, and the major discrepancy concerns the fact-value dichotomy, but it is important to reveal rationalizations to oppose the introduction of value propositions.

As to the fact-value dichotomy in educational debate, the first exposure to CEDA debate style often is confusing or even appalling. The rejection of this particular style may result from prevalent attitudes of judges. Initial arguments against CEDA in selecting value propositions were not that value propositions had to have rules clearly defined, but that it was senseless to argue

attitudes. Above all, many felt queasy in giving a win or loss decision. There were other objections to CEDA, particularly toward the student's absence of evidence, and also the absence of judging criteria of value topics.

A great many writers favor value propositions. Matlon's reasons for debating value propositions include the following: 1. Coaches and debaters would contribute to the understanding of value theory, and 2. Debaters would be subject to an explanation of the logic behind the value hierarchies used.[15] He further states that "debating propositions of value thereby would force debaters to understand and argue value premises as they apply to audience acceptance of those premises."[16] Another opinion in support of value propositions suggests that "...logic is clearly conceived today as broad enough to include arguments with value premises... if there is a value premise, there seems to be no reason why one cannot have a value conclusion."[17]

After evaluating the reasons given in support of value propositions with those against, some issues surface. It seems that the majority of those not in favor of value judgements feel that no one can tie a value to a reason nor a reason to a value. They see values unequal to reasons in terms of validity. Those critics deny what Malton, Petrie, and Wenzel have expressed--value statements are "closely intertwined with statements of fact and attitudes about policies...insofar as they evolved from the recognition of cognitive phenomena, even though claims made about those phenomena may be subject to dispute."[18] In essence, they deny practically any judgement made in policy propositions, for, as Malton points out, any decision we make is based upon our value system. For example,

consider a case in which the negative opposes the affirmative on the grounds of attitudinal inherency, such as prohibition. If this particular negative team were to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that such a position held by the affirmative team was not effective in the past (we did accept the policy at one time, but our value system has changed) nor, based on factual and opinion evidence, would be effective in the future because of an attitudinal barrier, judges should give the win to the negative on a workability issue. In other words, the negative would have proven that the attitudes of the people would be such that this particular policy would not and could not be effective. Thus, it is illustrated, perhaps minimally in an "isolated case," that we cannot escape value judgements in any type of decision-making process.

Relative to the fact-value dichotomy is the use of evidence in each style of debate. With NDT there exists a "prostitution" of evidence and with CEDA there is an "abortion" of evidence. The reasons for both cases are understood, yet harmful to fulfilling the goal of educational debate. The absence of evidence in CEDA can be attributed to the organization's protest toward NDT. Feeling that NDT debaters had gone to the extreme in using evidence cards in "proving" arguments never established other than through reading cards, and also feeling perhaps that "facts" had no real connection to values, debaters of CEDA went to the other extreme. They appeared to oppose any type of evidence (factual or opinion) in trying to develop strong lines of reasoning. As to why NDT debaters put so much emphasis on the use of evidence cards, a study by James Benson provides some answers. He attributes the goals of the American

Forensic Association as a major reason for the use of cards. He states,

> A frequently mentioned objective is that of teaching students to use evidence according to prescribed standards, including use of best available evidence, careful documentation of evidence, and accuracy in the use of evidence.[19]

Debate coaches should not encourage students to take this objective to the extreme as is currently done. By so doing, coaches overlook the possibility that students may see the use of reading cards as the essence of an argument rather than the support of the argument. (So many times judges comment on the ballot that just reading card after card does not establish an argument, but merely supports a point.) Just reading cards cannot have any application to the case in point unless some explanation or clarification is given. Why, then, do NDT debaters use so many pieces of evidence? The practice may stem from encouragement both by coaches and fellow debaters, observation of other debaters, and also from the basic indoctrination of scientism. Benson states in his study that even when debaters thought they were stressing quality of evidence they were only stressing the quantity.[20]

Not only do NDT debaters over-utilize the abundance of evidence available to them, they also do not conform to the AFA's goal of utilizing factual rather than opinion evidence. Benson notes the problem:

> Generally,...the debater's use of evidence does not conform to...usual textbook standards: a preference for factual, rather than opinion evidence.[21]

As indicated by Benson, most debaters do not conform to using factual

evidence as preferred (a scientific approach) but instead use opinion evidence as first choice, followed by the use of factual evidence. However, it is believed that opinion evidence is better than factual.[22] If this be the case, what reasons do members of CEDA have in opposition to the strong use of evidence, other than the philosophy that the use inhibits the development of arguments? (The argument that facts cannot be intertwined with values should no longer be an issue.)

Opposition toward CEDA of late is not against the use of value propositions, but rather toward the absence of evidence. CEDA appears to require little research. It is as though the debaters strictly "think off the top of their heads." Many of them are afraid of using any form of evidence card for fear that the mere use would not conform to the guidelines of debating value propositions, and also, because of the great opposition toward NDT. However, a student of persuasion knows that support is needed to express ideas, especially in the area of argumentation and debate. Not only does support add to the line of reasoning, but also to the credibility of the speaker. It is not suggested that it is necessary to doubt what is presented to the extent that fact upon fact must be reported, but rather, provide evidence to give clarity, insight, and support to the case in point. In this point of view, evidence can be considered as facts, statistics, and value judgements.

If a judge were to accept evidence as such, anything in support of a proposition (good reasons), he should have no trouble in judging any type of proposition. For example, in giving an evaluation in a value topic debate round, a judge can use the

criteria derived by Walter Fisher. According to Fisher, values can be identified and assessed on the same principles that we identify and assess facts.[23] (Of course, with values it is suggested that value hierarchies be used as guidelines in giving evaluations.) The argument still may arise concerning the outcome of the debate on value propositions. In debating value propositions judges are not deciding which value is better, as in NDT (plan vs. plan), but rather, as Wenzel suggests, they decide as follows:

> The question then becomes not which rule is better, for both may be perfectly sound rules, but rather which course of action is likely to produce the least harm in this specific situation. One thus proceeds to weigh the consequences of particular acts in order to reach decision in the given situation.[24]

Debating value propositions is an alternative to debating the traditional policy topics. However, coaches and debaters should consider value propositions equal in importance to policy propositions; and also, they should consider all the possible ways to evaluate value judgements. The birth of value propositions in the forensic community may be a move toward eliminating the fact-value dichotomy; thus an attempt to achieve the rhetoric of assent.

ENDNOTES

[1]George W. Ziegelmueller and Charles A. Dause, Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: 1975), pp. 5-6.

[2]Jack Howe, "A Brief Explanation of CEDA," Unpublished newsletter distributed by the members of the Cross Examination Debate Association, p. 1.

[3]Ibid, p. 4.

[4]Ronald Matlon, "Debating Propositions of Value," Journal of the American Forensic Association (Spring, 1968), p. 194.

[5]Wayne C. Booth, Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent (Notre Dame, Indiana: 1974), p. 14.

[6]Ibid, pp.13-21.

[7]Hugh Petrie, "Does Logic Have Any Relevance to Argumentation?" Journal of the American Forensic Association (Spring, 1969), pp. 56-57.

[8]Booth, pp. IX-XV.

[9]Joseph W. Wenzel, "Toward a Rationale for Value-Centered Argument," Journal of the American Forensic Association (Winter, 1977), p. 152.

[10]Ibid, p. 153.

[11]Ibid, p. 151.

[12]Matlon, p. 196.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid, p. 200.

[15]Ibid, p. 197.

[16]Ibid, p. 198.

[17]Petrie, pp. 56-57.

[18]Matlon, pp. 194-195.

[19]James A. Benson, "The Use of Evidence in Intercollegiate Debate," Journal of the American Forensic Association (Spring, 1971), p. 260.

[20]Ibid, p. 267.

[21]Ibid, p. 268.

[22]Ibid, p.

[23]Walter R. Fisher, "Toward a Logic of Good Reasons," The Quarterly Journal of Speech (Spring, 1978), pp. 376-384.

[24]Wenzel, p. 158.